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Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development

Statement submitted by Help Handicapped International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

Movement has many connotations. It is associated with independence, flexibility and progress. Imagine as a child not being able to run and hug your father when he returned from work or being stuck at home while your friends were out playing or as a youngster not being able to walk fast enough to catch the next train or bus to work or as an elderly person leading a cent per cent dependent life. For most of us these visualizations are not very pleasant. However, for some they are the reality of life. Do we ever spare a thought for the physically challenged around us? What can be done to reach out to such people?

Lofty ideas for some but a mission statement for Help Handicapped International (HHI) which aims to rehabilitate such people through fitting of the Jaipur foot prosthetic-an artificial limb designed and developed in India and very appropriate for the tens of thousands of amputees in Asia and Africa.

The prosthetic not only makes the physically challenged mobile but also imparts a sense of dignity to them as they feel they are "complete" and ready to face the challenges of life. This positive mental attitude is half the battle won in their quest for productive employment.

Our activities are, hence, in complete sync with the theme for the 2006 high level segment of the Economic and Social Council-namely-"Conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all and its impact on sustainable development". We aim to rehabilitate the physically challenged-a segment large not only by numbers but also by its impact on society as a whole.

Another significant highlight of our work is the locations in which we implement our projects. These are either conflict areas (Afghanistan, the Sudan, Burundi, Kenya) where the people are victims of landmines, internal strife or external aggressions or areas which have been ravaged by natural disasters like floods and earthquakes (Pakistan is a recent case after its earthquake of 2005).

To become disabled under such economically and socially depressing circumstances is like adding "fuel to the fire". The process of rehabilitation under such circumstances is therefore, doubly satisfying.

In the case of Pakistan a large number of those injured in the earthquake have lost their limbs and these amputees are now ready for prosthetics. This would be the first step in their rehabilitation.

To take another case-a country like Afghanistan-ravaged by instability for more than two decades with no worthwhile economic activity. A landmine victim under these conditions would feel as if his world has ended. To be able to walk, run and cycle within a few hours of entering a Jaipur foot camp is nothing short of a miracle for such beneficiaries. Of course we do not believe in miracles but still try to create a few hundreds at each camp!!!!